

VIBE ACTIVITIES

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HEALTHY VIBE

**STAY
STRONG**

Guiding Light

Djirruwang Program offers pathway to help community tackle mental illness.

A **ABORIGINAL MENTAL HEALTH TRAINEE KRISTEN ELLA IS PASSIONATE ABOUT HELPING HER PEOPLE AND CHARLES STURT UNIVERSITY'S (CSU) DJIRRUWANG PROGRAM IN WAGGA NSW IS HELPING HER ACHIEVE HER GOALS.**

Kristen is undertaking a Health Science (Mental Health) degree and is interning with Ryde Community Mental Health Centre in Sydney as part of her degree through CSU.

The Djirruwang Program is specifically designed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to gain high quality knowledge, skills and attitudes in the field of mental health. This is achieved by building on students' knowledge and combining mental health theory with clinical practice.

"The Djirruwang Program provides the opportunity for Aboriginal people to help close the gap for our people," Kristen says.

"As we know there is a life expectancy gap of around 20 years, the aim of the program is to educate and employ Aboriginal people in the Government sector so we can help our people receive treatment and also to prevent any illness.

"I notice in my work, as do other Aboriginal Health Workers, that Aboriginal people are more likely to visit a health care centre where an Aboriginal person is present."

Kristen's experience is that her people will also open up more and generally feel more comfortable with Aboriginal Health Workers.

She first became interested in the area of mental health from her dad who is an Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol worker.

"My dad found the program, as I was going to study social work, however this program is Aboriginal specific and you end up with a Health Science degree," she says.

The course is a mixture of practical and theoretical learning over three years. Students attend CSU four times a year and during the year submit assignments when they are not in the workplace doing the 'on the job' component of the degree.

This mix suits Kristen.

"I'm more of a practical learner and I like to physically do something and not just read about it," she says.

Kristen decided to undertake her practical training at Ryde Community Mental Health Centre for two reasons. The centre has a good reputation within the mental health care industry, and it's also close to Kristen's home on the Central Coast of NSW.

"I work in an acute team so that when an Aboriginal client walks in I will begin liaising with them and assessing their mental state. I don't case manage alone but co-case manage, and I also undertake counselling of clients," she says.

"I find a lot of mental health problems in our people stem from prejudice and racism in their early lives, and they carry that negativity. They still have their pride in culture, but some of the stories I have heard are brutal. And there's also the transgenerational trauma.

"There is also drugs and alcohol involved as well, in almost 100 per cent of cases.

"Our culture is so significant and people forget we are the First Australians and there is a lot of history there... and so many issues with Aboriginal health and chronic disease. Aboriginal people need to help other Aboriginal people."

Kristen's passion for working in mental health to help her people has got her through the tough times during her degree when study and work have been hard going.

"It's not always been easy – you need time management and you also need to take time out for yourself but I have a passion to work in Aboriginal mental health," she says.

She's in the third year of her degree but hopes to continue to study after she's finished.

"I want to get a psychology degree which will involve two and a half years part-time study. My long-term goals are to work in a community in the outback and also to work with Aboriginal people with mental health problems in jails because they need that support," she says.

Kristen urges young Aboriginal people to take a look at the Djirruwang Program.

"Check it out – it's something you could be interested in.

"There are 15 third year students in the Djirruwang Program from across Australia and I want to acknowledge their success in completing a degree to help our people."

To find out more head to: <http://www.csu.edu.au/study/science-courses/djirruwang/index.htm>



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ACTIVITY 1

BUILDING READING SKILLS

- skimming and scanning for information.
- reading headings, text boxes and pictures.
- reading for meaning.
- making connections between the text and your world.



There are three levels of comprehension questions:

- Literal** The answer is located in one sentence in the text.
- Inferred** You need to make links between sentences and graphics (such as illustrations, maps and tables) and what you already know.
- Applied** The answer is in your background knowledge and what you already know or feel.

1 Which program offers a way for communities to tackle mental illness? (literal)



2 What are some of the aims of the program? (inferred)

3 What are some reasons that the Health Science (Mental Health) course suits Kristen Ella? (inferred)



4 What does Kristen plan to do after completing her course? (inferred)

- gain a psychology degree
- complete the third year of her degree
- join the Djirriwang Program
- Ryde Community Mental Health Centre



5 What is the relationship between the photo and the main text? (inferred)



6 What is the overall purpose for writing this text? (applied)

ACTIVITY 2

LANGUAGE CONVENTIONS – SPELLING

- 1** The spelling mistakes in these sentences have been underlined. Write the correct spelling for each word in the box.

The coarse is helping her to achieve her goals.

It builds knowledge, skills and attitudes in the feild of mental health.

The program is aimed at improveing mental health.

We can help people receeve mental health treatment.



- 2** Each sentence has one word that is incorrect. Write the correct spelling of the word in the box.

It is important to maintane your mental health.

Kristen is gaining important experiense.

Kristen will also undertake client councilling.

Kristen has a pashon for her career.

ACTIVITY 3

LANGUAGE CONVENTIONS – GRAMMAR

- 1** Which word correctly completes this sentence?

Kristen has already _____ her second year.

- complete
- completed
- completely
- completing



2 Which word is missing from the second sentence?

She is in the third year of her degree _____ hopes to continue to study after she is finished.

- while
- whereas
- however
- but



3 These words are all written in the **past tense**, put in the correct word to change them into the **present tense**.



past tense	present tense
studied	study
helped	
achieved	
gained	
educated	
received	
prevented	
visited	
worked	
managed	

4 Which words are **nouns** in this sentence?

My long-term goals are to work in a community in the outback.

- My, are, to, in
- goals, community, outback
- long-term
- work



ACTIVITY 4

LANGUAGE CONVENTIONS – PUNCTUATION



1 Apostrophes for contraction and possession.

One of the most common uses of the apostrophe is to show two words that have joined together, called a **contraction**.

We use an apostrophe to show where there are missing letters in a contraction.

Match the contraction.

should not	
he will	
he is	
we have	
they will	

they'll he'll we've he's shouldn't

2 Write this sentence correctly, adding the missing punctuation.

im more of a practical learner and i like to physically do something and not just read about it kristen says


